



"IF THAT SOMEONE'S FROM OUTER SPACE, THEY'LL JUST GO THROUGH THE WALL ANYWAYS"

Martin S. Kottmeyer

IT HAS been remarked upon more than once that maybe the most unbelievable aspect of alien abductions is that people report seeing the aliens pass through solid matter and have even shown the ability to take humans through walls, closed doors, and windows with them. Dan Wright reported that out of 142 cases available in 1995, there were 45 cases of beings having passed through solid walls. In 31 cases the witnesses themselves were aware that they, themselves, were being passed through solid matter. (Lewels 1997) Thus this is not just a matter of the occasional oddball case, but a very significant fraction of abductions that are rendered questionable. At least, that is, to those capable of disbelief.

Advocates insist that abductees must be believed, particularly as they do repeatedly see it with their own eyes and experience it with their own bodies. They make appeal to the possibility that aliens possess the ability to utilise other dimensions. Budd Hopkins and Carol Rainey in *Sight Unseen* appeal to the vocabulary of superstring theory which allows the existence of more than the four dimensions we already know about and wax wonderingly how we too could pass through walls "if only you were in the Fifth Dimension". (Hopkins and Rainey 2003) Another abduction proponent has similarly written "These dimensional creatures can move easily through walls and, yet, not violate man's known physics." (Thompson 1999) This passes as cutting edge thinking among believers though it seems basically the same dodgy rhetoric that advocates of the paranormal have relied upon for generations. I think particularly of P.D. Ouspensky's popular 1931 apologia *A New Model of the Universe* that appealed to not only the Fourth Dimension but even six and seven

dimensions to account for all the miracles of the supernatural realm like dematerialisation, out-of-the-body experiences, and astral beings. The contactees of the Fifties frequently acclaimed the reality of higher dimensions and a poll of 399 UFO buffs circa 1980 found 61% accepted the Fourth Dimension as an explanation for the origin of UFOs. (Stupple and Dashti 1980)

Though advocates insist there is no violation of physical laws, I will risk pedantry and quote a physics textbook I grew up with that states matter, by definition, is impenetrable. It formulates it as a law: "Two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time." This does not deny the existence of porosity. Sponges take up water, water seeps through cement. Atoms, however, have structure. (Dull 1960) Atomic nuclei repel each other. In quantum theory, Pauli exclusion rules exclude electrons from occupying the same place around an atom. If you try to pass a body through a wall you experience dynamic resistance. Mystics like to say atoms are mostly empty space, but this ignores the more relevant truth that it is a space defined by forces that bind the particles to tight trajectories. These have the effect of forming shells that repel the passage of electrons and atomic nuclei into them and keep atoms distinct units that may touch and bind, but not pass through each other.

Admittedly, there are things that can pass through atoms and walls with no consequential interactions. Neutrinos, in part because of their neutral charge, have the ability to pass through the whole earth. But converting the atoms of a body to neutrinos, recapturing them on the opposite side of a wall, and reassembling them into atoms again is not a thinkable

option even in the airiest speculative scenario. The neutrinos would be impossible to manipulate.

This brings up a troubling aspect to the claim. Those percipients who are passed through walls do not speak of their bodies being transmuted in some manner to make the feat possible. They pass through intact with no discontinuity of experience and even "no particular physical sensation". (Jacobs 1992, p. 51) How does the body pass into this hypothetical new dimension without atoms becoming disassembled? Even in superstring theory, the higher dimensions are not simple additions to up, forward, and sideways. In the theory, they are wrapped up in bundles on the order of 10^{-33} cm and have been since microseconds after the Big Bang. How could those dimensions possibly be unwrapped and scaled up through nearly three dozen orders of magnitude to allow a person up in the world of everyday life to float around in it? [imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/science/mysteries_12/superstring.html]

Wouldn't atoms fly apart as this additional dimension is opened up? Ponder what happens at the subatomic level. What happens to the nucleus? Does it remain a three dimensional entity or does it spread out into a smaller hypersphere? If the nuclear forces act only in three dimensions what prevents the electrons from flying away as the orbit drifts away into 4-space? If the nucleus spreads into 4-space, however, the diameter in spaces 1 to 3 shrinks. The electron shells must also shrink and this changes vibration rates. The basis for electron bonds in molecules changes. Everything in biochemistry changes.

Presumably there will need to be Big Bang scale energy beyond anything available today or we would have reports

of physicists dancing around in these unfurled dimensions celebrating their Nobel Prize-winning technological milestone. Isn't it fair to ask why we don't hear any claims of abductees seeing massive dimension-unwrapping machines being show-and-telled on tours of saucer interiors by the friendlier aliens?

Jacobs escalates the strangeness of the situation by theorising people are probably rendered invisible by the mechanism that makes wall penetration possible. This is necessary because outside witnesses to these miracles are 'exceedingly rare'. (Jacobs 1992, p. 51) This is a comforting way to excuse so doubtful a notion. Even the most open-minded scientists tend to regard invisibility as the most impossible of science fiction concepts to justify. (Clarke 1972)

It seems the height of absurdity. Yet it is accepted. Ufologists are nothing if not open-minded and boundary-breakers.

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In his effort to use cognitive psychology to explain religion, Pascal Boyer regards a claim such as "a man who walked through a wall" as an "ontological violation". (Boyer 2001) It violates a basic ontological property of people, fundamental to our mental templates of how bodies behave in reality. It is not merely odd, such as, say a man with six fingers. It is something so apart from everyday experience that one must doubt either the man exists or categorize him as a supernatural entity. Ontological violations tend to be vivid and we tend to remember them more easily over time than the six-fingered man. Such ontological violations are the raw material of religions. Images of the dead walking among the living are typical among these violations. It violates what we know about dead things, but rather than dismiss them we hold the memories special. Spirits and ghosts are ubiquitous ingredients in myths and religions. They typically violate common experience in multiple ways, not least that ability to pass through walls. Most famously, in Christianity, the ability to pass through closed doors is said to be possessed by the risen Christ. This is based on John 20:19 which reads "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled

for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

The trait has not been limited to simple ghosts. In 1820, the production of *The Vampire; or, The Bride of the Isles* precipitated the invention of a stage effect involving what became known as the "vamp trap". This was a pair of spring-loaded doors cut into the scenery that allowed the fiendish Ruthven to disappear through apparently solid walls. (Kendrick 1991)

Some will recall that in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1890) the Spirit of Christmas Past is not only able to pass through walls, it is able to take Scrooge with it through them. This trait is present in its various film adaptations, re-makes, and re-imaginings through the years. (Dickens 1890)

As a trait of the supernatural, the ability to pass through walls has also extended to witches and magicians who become adept in trafficking with the world beyond the living. In Eastern religions, we see claims that masters of Yoga are able to acquire the ability to pass through walls. Even mere illusionists in their quest to awe audiences have come up with various schemes to create the illusion they can walk through walls. Houdini gained some fame and controversy with his variant such that his act of walking through a brick wall became attached to his legend in a big way. A 1959 biography of Houdini bore the subtitle *The Man Who Walked Through Walls*. (Henning 1977)

Science fiction is nefarious in its appropriation of old myths dressed up by modern technobabble. Miracles become inevitably recast into pulp technological terms. In 1943, a French author named Marcek Aymé wrote *Le Passe-Muraille* [trans. *The Walker through the Walls*] It is a classic yarn about an obscure civil servant turned daring super-criminal who acquires the ability to walk through solid walls. (Lofficer 2000) Jean Boyer turned it into a 1950 film - *Garou, Garou le Passe Muraille* - and Germany created a version in 1960 that won the Lubitsch prize for the best humorous film of 1960. (Hardy 1984)

In America, an early instance of the recasting of matter interpenetration from the supernatural into technofuturist gimmickry appears in the Buck Rogers comics. In a strip dated 4-14-1948 we are



introduced to a molecular permeator ray that lets humans pass through walls with no more resistance than a gas. In 1950 Buck straps on a portable version of the molecular permeator in order to walk through a wall and pretend to be a ghost. (Williams 1988) Bill Warren praises *4D Man* (1959) as his favourite film to use matter permeability as its central concept. The central character becomes unhinged as a side-effect of this ability. Warren remarks that matter interpenetration is hard to justify consistently. What prevents matter from sinking into the earth once it becomes permeable? (Warren 1986) Another notable instance of this trait becoming techno appears in *The Adventure of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* (1984). In an early part of the film a new device called an overthrunder allows Banzai's jetcar to travel through a mountain. This event causes a Dr Lizardo to recall his experiment in travelling through a wall many years earlier. He slides headfirst into a wall and is attacked by lectroids. He goes mad. When Banzai reveals an alien threat to the earth, a disbelieving presidential aide remarks "the man's been through solid matter. Maybe his mind is scrambled." This may arguably be an allusion to *4D Man*'s unhinged central

character. But, it also a pretty reasonable worry.

A slightly different question worth asking is when this trait first became characteristic of the advanced aliens from outer space. I have no solid answer, but there is a significant story by A.E. van Vogt called "Discord in Scarlet" in the December 1939 *Astounding* which involves a red 6-limbed ancient and powerful alien named Ixtl who demonstrates the ability to rearrange his atomic structure so as to pass through walls and floors at will. (van Vogt 1992, pp. 129, 132) His race once mastered the ability to control the movement of whole solar systems. He is also able to carry human bodies through walls with him. (Van Vogt 1992, p. 147) Ixtl captures living human bodies to plant eggs inside. When they hatch after a few hours, they eat the surrounding flesh to grow, rather like certain wasps. (p. 160-1, 175) This story is acknowledged as the forerunners to the 1958 film *It! The Terror from Beyond Space* and, in turn, *Alien* (1979) and its franchise. This is mentioned to indicate the original story's repute - the films did not reprise that trait of matter interpenetration.

Fredric Brown's *Martians Go Home!* (Brown 1955) is especially notable because it stars a race of Martians that fits our definitions of Greys in several respects - short, spindly, genderless, bald, and brainy. Their brains give them a psychic power labelled in the story 'kwimming'. It is something like teleportation without technical assistance or mental travel made possible by a superior mind. They affirm if we were smarter we could do it. It is an ability critical to the story since it allows them to appear absolutely anywhere they want. "Most of them had kwimmed their way, without knocking, right into living rooms, bedrooms, television stations, night clubs, theatres, taverns, barracks, igloos, jails, everywhere." (Brown 1955) This makes them an incredible nuisance since they are excessively interested in, amused by and disgusted at our method of procreation. They are abusive, sarcastic killjoys, and narkish. They tattled on everyone and habitually told the truth, unfortunately the whole truth. Still worse, they could not only see in the dark, but they could see through blankets, sort of the X-ray equivalent of kwimming. Similar super-X-ray vision can be found among Greys,

notably among Dorothy Cannon's *Custodians* (1999). The major divergences from our modern Greys involved the face: the eyes are tiny and bright, the mouth is twice as big as humans', the nose large and the skin colour is olive to emerald green.

It is perhaps relevant that a 1960 work published in France in 1960 *The Morning of the Magicians* (Pauwels & Bergier 1973), in a discussion of depictions of the paranormal in science fiction, remarks Mutants with special powers commonly have telekinesis, but more, "Other writers go further and show us the Superior Being floating in the air or going through walls; but this is pure fantasy, an agreeable echo of the archetype of all fairy stories." Thus there is probably much more of this sort of thing than I've run across.

The earliest movie to show the trait seems likely to be *Warning from Space* (1956). In it there is a scene where an alien that has been transformed into a female Japanese celebrity converses with a scientist. When done delivering its message it turns around and walks through a closed door. The implication is that such a magical feat could not be done by a human and demonstrates to the disbelieving scientist that she is an alien.

More ambiguously, there is a scene in *The Mysterians* (1957) where aliens invite a team of scientists into the alien base. The entrance gives the appearance of a bright arch on the side of the base and when they walk through it, it is sort of like passing through a barrier though not precisely. When they turn the corner it seems more like walking into a lighted cave entrance.

The Adventures of Superman, the TV series, also presents an early instance of the trait in its 1957 episode "The Mysterious Cube". Superman is called upon to catch a criminal in an impenetrable cube and he utilises mind powers suggested by eastern philosophy to walk into the metal. He is warned not to let his concentration be broken or he could find himself trapped.

Any hope this trait could be regarded as esoteric and not part of our general cultural heritage goes out the window in 1961. On 26 May, *The Twilight Zone* broadcasts a story - "Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up" - about people in a diner who are caught up in a dilemma of figuring out who among them is an alien that survived a nearby crash. One

character reasons that any alien present need have no worry of being caught. Quote: "If that someone's from outer space, they'll just go through the wall anyways." This demonstrates with little ambiguity that this was a piece of general knowledge about aliens well before it became an issue in the abduction controversy. The premiere abduction of Betty and Barney Hill was several months in the future.

On 6 April 1964 *The Outer Limits* airs an episode, "The Special One" in which a boy genius is taught by an alien how to walk through walls. He does this a couple of times. It is the alien's ability to pass through walls and teleport himself, when witnessed by the boy's father, that clearly unveils his son's teacher as an invader near the climax.

Later that year - 5 December 1964 - the series gives us "Keeper of the Purple Twilight". In the opening moments we see an alien walk through a closed gate and the closed doors to the lab of a scientist working on some equations destined to create a weapon of incredible destructive capabilities worse than atomic energy. The alien is a veritable stereotypical Grey: bald, big-headed and unfamiliar with human emotions. Even the gill folds have recurred on abductor Greys, notably the 19 November 1980 Longmont, Oregon abduction.



In the TV series *Star Trek*, the ability to pass through walls is highlighted in the episode "All Our Yesterdays" (1969). Near the end of the life of a distant world, the inhabitants build a time portal and escape doom by travelling into the past. Hearing a scream, Kirk mistakenly races through the portal and finds himself greeted by amazed looks. He turns around and sees he has passed through a brick wall. It is a superstitious time, and the act helps to brand him as a witch. What makes this doubly notable is that the act of passing through the portal is accompanied by a stroboscopic flashing

effect where the body alternates photographic negatives with positive frames in a jerky slow-motion fashion. The effect is very curious and highly suggestive of Betty Andreasson's drawing on 10 April 1977 showing entities "moving in a jerky motion, leaving a



vapoury image behind." She alternates images that have shading with images that do not. Hers is almost certainly the earliest depiction of an abduction having aliens that "passed through solid wood as if it were nonexistent". (Fowler 1979)

Awed by the spectacle, Betty was driven to wonder if it was real and thought back to angels and the fact that Jesus could walk through closed doors. Though doubtless a relevant point, it seems more noteworthy that the special effects of the drawing seem curiously wedded to the time - a very Sixties way of visualisation. Besides *Star Trek*, intercutting negatives was a recurrent optical effect in *The Outer Limits*, appearing in several episodes that include "Controlled Experiment," "It Crawled Out of the Woodwork" and "The Borderlands". The last used it in a context of opening up an alternative dimension. Other SF series and even psychedelic films used the technique. Such alternating stroboscopic effects are hard to find prior to this era. It would also be interesting to know if this alternating effect recurred in alien abduction narratives apart from Andreasson on a consistent basis. My impression is that it did not.

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We should back up here to pose the question of when the earliest manifestations of matter interpenetration were reported in UFO culture. We are confronted with the common problem of when the tale is set versus when it is first documented or published.

A famous contactee, George King, of the Aetherius Society, tells of a visit set in

1954, when a great master of Yoga from India taught King to telepathically contact Aetherius, the being from Venus. When the Yogi was done, King says of the Swami, "Then he made his exit by walking straight through my locked door." Though set in 1954, I am taking the quote from a book published in 1961. Thus you can argue about whether it truly precedes two other claims to follow. (King 1961) Wall penetration claims continue to be sometimes associated with Eastern religions. Shoko Asahara of the Aum Shinri Kyo cult claimed many of Christ's magical powers including this ability to pass through walls. (Alnor 1998) Hing-ming Chen of the God Saves the Earth Flying Saucer Association believed that when God took Chen's form he would be able to pass through walls. (Flying Saucer Gazette 1998)

My colleague Dennis Stillings has drawn my attention to the fact that wall penetration was an important aspect of the infamous tale of *The Philadelphia Experiment*. In Carlos Allende's letter to Morris Jessup, received 13 January 1956, he wrote of the victims "Most went insane, one just walked 'thru' His quarters Wall in sight of his Wife & Child and 2 other crew Members (WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN)..." (Moore 1979) The Allende Letters were an important part of Sixties lore and there is a paperback by Steiger and Whitenour on them published in 1968. The sailor walking through a wall was included on p. 59 of their book.

The first close encounter to display the trait seems most likely one that appeared in the Sputnik wave of 1957. At 6:30 in the morning of 6 November, 12-year old Everett Clark of Dante, Tennessee sees a UFO in the field outside his home. Two men and two women looking like German soldiers are nearby. One of them grabs at the boy's dog Frisky who growls. He backs off and tries taking another dog nearby who tries to bite him. He lets go. When they got into the ship it looked as if they 'walked through the side, as if it were glass.' (Bowen 1969) It has been suggested this may be a winking allusion to *Alice Through the Looking Glass* and the fact that there was a dog aboard the history-making second Sputnik orbited shortly before his story originated seems to make it all a bit too timely - a transparent effort to get his name in the newspapers.

We have offered already that the Andreasson case seems to be the first abduction case to feature wall penetration, but we have a curious situation about the second. A Myron Fass publication *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind* June 1978 contains a piece titled "Space Aliens Cloned my Double": "It looked old with a distorted bulbous head. It was very pale, and so white that it seemed light blue tinged. It had large staring eyes and the mouth and nose, which must have been up in the forehead, were just a patch of strange folds" [think "Keeper of the Purple Twilight"] It passed right through the golden wall as though through butter. This is almost certainly a work of fiction. Though not specifically confessed, Fass was known to present wildly false claims like aliens destroying and recreating the town of Chester, Illinois. While written after Betty Andreasson drew her drawings of wall-penetrating aliens in 1977, it appears before *Andreasson Affair* was published in 1979. Yet both feature Grey-like entities with this same supernatural ability. Odd.

Needless to say, all these pre-Hopkins era manifestations of the trait should be embarrassing in a genealogical sense. What believer wouldn't prefer a situation where the trait never appeared in contactee lore? What bliss to ignore that line from *The Twilight Zone*?

I will leave to others the task of creating a full history of this trait among UFO aliens if they should feel there is any point to it. [There might be. You would find the inevitable variation in details. There might be correlates to other details of abduction narratives - a generalised permeability of boundaries and categories, for example. In Andreasson's case we have things like the membrane punctured during the nasal implant insertion.] Wright's tally suggests there would be minimally dozens of abduction narratives; David Jacobs states there are "hundreds of accounts of people flying through closed windows." (Jacobs 1992) It all sounds wearisome to me and anyways I feel the fundamentally psychosocial aspects of the situation are set out well enough with the material just presented.

The alien ability to pass through walls brands alien abductions as a supernatural unreality more intense than truth that refuses to acknowledge impossibilities of any kind. The descent of abduction advocacy rhetoric into the mystical babble

of higher dimensions seen in recent works increasingly renders the ETH interpretation unpalatable to scientific sensibilities and displaces it fully into a problem for the history of faith. Spirits passed through walls centuries before aliens were reported doing so and fictional aliens were doing it well before the 'real' ones did. There is no particular difficulty in seeing how this trait could have found its way into abduction experiences by precedents both in the culture of UFO belief and the general culture. In happier moments, one may even entertain speculations involving a transpersonal psychological process underlying supernatural entities that explains the imagining and holding in awe of entities that penetrate and violate boundaries of all sorts.

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Postscript:

Incidentally, SF continues to technologise the impossible into the present. *Stargate SG-1*'s episode "Enigma" has the team make contact with a superior civilisation that is primarily defined by a small device that gives them the ability to pass through walls. This ability makes them effectively immune to confinement or imprisonment. When a guard interposes, the alien passes through the person just as easily.

"Impossible" is the first reaction. But, of course, it should be the final one as well, since this is fiction. A gorgeous application of the trait to aliens perfuses *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001). Ghosts of a world destroyed by war infest the Earth and etheric science must come to the rescue of Gaia.

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LITERARY CRITICISM

Reviews by Peter Rogerson

Michael Busby, *Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery*, Pelican Publishing, 2004

First the good news, Michael Busby here provides detailed transcripts of newspaper reports/folk tales of the airship taken from the Texas newspapers of 1897. These provide a rich vein of source material for ufologists and folklorists alike.

The less good news is that Busby, an engineer of course, takes all these stories at face value. These include such well known hoaxes as the Aurora crash, relocated traditional tales such as the aerial sailor of Merkel, and stories obviously written with tongue very much in cheek as though they were all po faced accounts of actual physical events. These events are then used as the building bricks of a vast narrative construction involving the real human operators of real humanly built airships.

As with modern theories of terrestrial secret projects this raises the obvious question of why nothing much was done with this amazing technology, other than flaff around entertaining or scaring the pants off the locals. Busby produces a scenario in which the majority of the airships crash, killing the pilots, and the rest are silenced by the railroad interests to account for this. However, as among the survivors were a couple of characters close to the military industrial complex of the period, this seems rather unlikely. One of these guys was later involved with military planning during the US's involvement in the Great War; one wonders why the mystery airships weren't brought in on the allied side then. And what happened to them between 1897 and their reappearance in 1909.

Most ufologists have come to the view that the 1897 airship stories were largely hoaxes concocted by the press and by telegraph operators. Busby will have none of this, but many of his arguments suggest he has a rather anachronistic view of the

19th century press as sober journals of record. Of course in the pre-cinema days they were often the main source of entertainment. Busby also cannot see that these stories were not "hoaxes" played on an unsuspecting public, but satire, commentary, in jokes etc. which the readership would have been in on from the start.

However, Busby does demonstrate that several of the "inventors" named by the "witnesses" were indeed real people, who he has been able to track through a variety of genealogical records. This suggests that if these stories were all fictions, there was rather more planning behind their appearance than has been assumed. Whether some of these stories were planted as part of a commercial scam, were part of a propaganda campaign aimed at the Spanish, or as part of some political agenda is unclear. I suspect that to find the answer to that we would have to know a lot more than we do about the editors and proprietors of the newspapers involved, and their social, business and political circles.

It's also more than possible that rather more of these stories than has been assumed are based on the sort of visionary, dreamlike experiences that we encounter in today's studies of anomalous personal experience. The airship was a prime symbol of ambivalent modernity, and the stories came at a time of mounting war hysteria and domestic social unrest. The November 1896 presidential election had been the first ideological contest between the major candidates since the civil war, the gold standard and imperialist candidate William McKinley had beaten the silver standard and anti-imperialist William Jennings Bryan, who had electrified the country with his famous "cross of gold speech" One of the great themes of the airship stories was its use as a weapon of mass destruction to be used against Cuba, the modern American

technological world versus the old world of Catholic Spain. In these dreams, visions, ~~sa~~ires, short stories, hoaxes and urban legends one encounters a mixture of edging humour and an undercurrent of real menace. Reading them you understand that through them people are encountering the promise and menace of the coming century, unable to tell if it will make its people angels or devils.

Jorge Conesa Sevilla, *Wrestling With Ghosts: A Personal and Scientific Account of Sleep Paralysis*, Xlibris Corporation, 2004 £14.00

This is the first book-length treatment of sleep paralysis (sometimes called aware sleep paralysis or awareness of sleep paralysis - ASP) since David Hufford's *The Terror that Comes in the Night*, published more than 20 years ago. While Hufford was mainly concerned with presenting the experience as evidence that folklore is often based on real knowledge and experience, rather than being cultural constructs based on repeated stories, Conesa is more concerned with both the scientific and humanistic approaches. On the scientific side, he links in the phenomena with a wider discussion of dream consciousness and sets it down firmly as a natural experience. On the humanistic side he explores both his own SP experiences and those of the subjects in his "longitudinal study" and suggests that they can be mastered and turned into signals which allow the experiencer to enter into lucid dreams, out of the body experiences and shamanic journeys. For Conesa dreams are works of art or poetry in which elements can be assembled to construct myths.

In his linking SP with false awakenings Conesa follows in the tradition of psychical researchers such as Celia Green and Charles McCreery who collected accounts of such experiences in the 1960s and 1970s.

Conesa suggests strongly that alien abduction narratives are the latest cultural take on the SP experience, and anyone who compares some of the experiences detailed here with the autobiographical accounts of Katarina Wilson or Ray Fowler will see the similarities leap out at them. This simply strengthens the identification of the "domestic abduction" with the SP experience. The similarities just go on; for example if "abduction" experiences seem to run in families so too do SP experiences, Conesa's daughter has them, so too do members of his wife's family.

Conesa covers a much wider range of experiences than Hufford, and this brings the connection closer. The fantastic adventures in which abductees find themselves have echoes in the lucid and ultra vivid dreams of SP experiences; these include sensations of floating, going through tunnels, seeing strange lights, hearing peculiar noises, etc. Though Conesa does not mention this we can be sure that the abduction experience is just the latest modern day cultural manifestation of the "secret night adventure". These adventures in various cultures have included being turned into a horse and ridden round the fields by fairies, entering the spirit procession of women following the goddess, entering people's houses, eating their food and drinking their wine, going to sabbats on broomsticks, being werewolves, being part of the spirit host which defends the crops against foreign werewolves. Tales of Satanic abuse or of being secret CIA mules seem to belong in the same category.

As Conesa points out that SP doesn't have to be confined to the bedroom but can occur when there is sleep deprivation, fatigue, anxiety etc, noting it is prevalent in hospital personnel, shift workers, truck drivers, possibly airline pilots, traffic controllers and others, then we can look for it in a much wider set of contexts. Betty and Barney Hill's adventures, with their long, fatigue-ridden night journey seem likely candidates for micro REM and micro SP induced phenomena and for possible SP associated with REM rebound the next night. Then there is AVB driving his tractor at night, and many other abduction narratives centred around the night journey.

Not just abductions of course, for many other UFO stories centre on

nocturnal journeys or strange awakenings. Some SP experiences also have a sort of aura like that experienced by migraine and epilepsy sufferers, in which they feel electric charges going through their body, sensations of expectancy "as if something is going to happen" and other odd bodily sensations. All very familiar, remember those EM cases. In many such cases the lines between misperception, illusion, hallucination and dream become very blurred indeed.

Conesa's linking SP with shamanism also resonates with abduction phenomena, with themes of ordeal and magical journey. It does have to be said here at times that Conesa gets a little deep greeny and new agey, while at the same time resolutely rejecting "supernaturalist" interpretations and denouncing the abduction finders. His linking of alien abduction imagery with birth memories seems far fetched; perhaps early childhood hospitalisation might be a more plausible explanation of the medical imagery evoked by the SP sense of being bound and helpless.

Also bound to be controversial is his linking of SP experiences with geomagnetic activity, in particular with what appears to be an increased folkloric reporting of such phenomena in places around the Pacific ring of fire. I don't know about that; there is a mighty strong tradition of such experiences in British ghostlore and we aren't exactly in a volcano-rich, geologically unstable region. There may, however, be something in this on a micro scale and it is certainly worth following up. Such a possibility might explain the prevalence of SP experiences in certain localities, if this is due to anything other than anxiety.

Though, being privately published and lacking a good editor, this is not always a smooth and easy read, it is well worth persisting with. *Magonia* readers are also recommended to check Dr Conesa's website at

<http://www.geocities.com/jorgeconesa/Paralysis/sleepnew.html>

Even if he is a bit new agey round the edges, Conesa's approach seems far more humane than the paranoid rantings of the abduction finder general and his deluded disciples, and in general terms his mixture of the scientific and humanistic approaches is well within the *Magonia* tradition.

John S. Buescher, *The Other Side of Salvation: Spiritualism and the Nineteenth Century Religious Experience*, Skinner House Books, 2004 \$18.00

A study of the defection of leading figures of the Universalist denomination in nineteenth century America to Spiritualism might seem to be unbearably dull, surely of interest only to historically minded members of that denomination. That it is not, is due to the plethora of strange characters that are discussed here. Many would be today regarded as UFO contactees and abductees, people who claimed contact with the supernaturals who endorsed their own contemporary social, religious, scientific and sexual concerns. For many of these people, already attached to a liberal form of Christianity, part of the appeal of Spiritualism was that it offered a modern, "scientific" and "progressive" faith, which they contrasted with the "outworn superstitions" of traditional forms of belief.

Among the characters noted here were John Bovee Dods (original name Johannes Bonfils) whose house became the centre of all sorts of poltergeist phenomena, and who had spiritual visitations which look like sleep paralysis episodes; Andrew Jackson Davis, the autodidact precursor of Spiritualism; and above all John Murray Spear, who founded a strange sex cult, engaged in what today would be called performance art, and built a mysterious living machine which seems to have been intended to be a universal replicator.

As the century neared its end, Spiritualism lost its radical edge and mass interest faded as it became more respectable.

David Lorimer (ed.), *Science, Consciousness and Ultimate Reality*, Imprint Academic, 2004 £14.95

A collection of essays on the problems of consciousness, the nature of reality, and the relationship between science and religion representing several viewpoints are expressed but mainstream scientific naturalism tends to be downplayed. It would seem that the majority of the contributors are unhappy with scientific naturalism and especially with the idea that consciousness is contingent on brain activity. It is probably the psychical researchers Bernard Carr and David

Fenwick who express the most traditional dualistic approaches. Curiously, Carr emerges as even more materialist than the naturalists when he argues that our perceptions exist in higher-dimensional physical space. Philosopher Mary Midgley and psychologist Stuart Claxon argue against this kind of apartheid dualism which sees the "real person" as something alien and apart from the natural world.

Several writers address the relationship between science and religion, which they invariably equate with Trinitarian Christianity, and claims that theology has access to truths that science doesn't. The problem here is that they make claims that some mythologies (for example the Hebrew, or the Vedic in the case of some of the other contributors) contain truths that others (eg Viking, Sioux, Xhosa, Roman) don't. Perhaps we should look on a more global basis at all the world's traditions. For example, reviving the notion of the "undead" may help to solve a number of current medico-ethical problems. Instead of seeing the world in sharp terms of the living and the dead, we should see that there are various levels of "undeath" between the two.

Tony Rothman, *Everything is Relative and Other Fables from Science and Technology*, John Wiley and Sons, 2003 Textbook history, especially the sort used in schools, has a way of over-simplifying everything, and creating nice, neat, little stories often focusing on particular heroic individuals. The history of science and technology is no exception to this rule. Here Rothman shows how the often very complex and difficult to discern paths of scientific discovery are reduced to convenient fairy tales of unique discovery or invention by a single charismatic individual. Thus penicillin was "discovered" by Fleming, the electron by Thomson; Edison invented the light bulb, Bell the telephone, Morse the telegraph and Marconi radio. Eddington's study of solar eclipses in 1919 "proved" the general theory of relativity, Young conducted a key experiment which

demonstrated the wave nature of light and so on. Rothman argues that the real situations were often far more complicated. Often the paths to inventions take place in stages, or there are rival claims; something can be discovered several times over before it enters the public historical domain. In many cases it is having the right connections and flair for publicity which leads to the attribution of a discovery, rather than who is genuinely first. Discoveries and inventions are often "in the air" and it is a matter of luck who gets there first. A nice revisionist history and excellent antidote to hero worship.

Review by Martin S. Kottmeyer

Scott Montgomery, *The Moon and the Western Imagination*, University of Arizona Press, 1999

While I had some awareness of parts of this story, Montgomery has pulled together a seemingly comprehensive history of thinking about the nature of the Moon from the Greeks up to the fixing of the names of features on the Moon. There's not much here about thinking on the subject of life on the moon - no fault of the author - but there is rather more about whether the Moon is somehow a world like the Earth or not.

I'm not going to re-tell all the contents beyond saying the ideas were quite varied before the modern era. There is, however, one point about this history which I found quite astonishing. There were no attempts at photo-realistic depictions of the Moon until 1420-5. This is odd in several ways. First, the technology of painting goes back thousands of years and there was plenty of talent even in the days of cave-art. In ancient Greece, we have a bounty of detailed work particularly in the realistic depiction of the human body, a suitably complex subject. The Greeks knew the moon existed and we see it represented in illustration work as a round body. But

EDITORIAL

Martin Kottmeyer continues his investigations of the motifs to be found in UFO contact and abduction narratives. In this issue he shows us that there is nothing original about the notion of aliens or humans gliding through walls. We can also see that many of the details appear to derive from science fiction stories and films, and that the idea itself is ancient.

Although such stories have long been a part of popular culture, the nuts-and-bolts school of ufology will continue to deny the relevance of such findings to UFO stories and continue to indulge in their sad fantasies.

there is no effort to make an accurate sketch of the face of the moon though they realised it was more than merely round but had some sort of spottiness to its appearance. There is no fundamental obstacle against some artist just sketching the moon as it appears. Why then didn't someone?

Montgomery is surely right that Van Eyck was the first because there was a growing trend to detail-work about virtually everything in Nature in this period and Van Eyck was particularly adept and prolific in this sort of detailed photo-realistic art. Yet, there is a nagging question how it is *nobody* before him even attempted a casual sketch that historians can find. The moon after all was hardly unimportant. People tracked it and made it a basis of time keeping. The moon is helpful in hunting at night and allows one to forage, garden, and see friends and enemies. People had seen the spots and imagined faces, rabbits, and people in the shapes of the spots. Yet, nobody thought to draw it realistically.

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